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On Other Pages

Anglicans Demand Repeal of Area Segregation Act 2
Ancient Lexicon Discovered 2
Ethiopia Authorizes LWF Radio Station 2
WCC Leader Addresses Russian Baptists 3
Birth Control Issue Called "Football" 3
Asian Colleges Offer Free Student Places 3
Greek Church Dedicates Deaconess School 4
Three Australian Churches Unite Missionary Training 4
Churchmen Offer to Act as Strike Mediators 4
Revised Greek New Testament in Preparation 5

Orthodox to Prepare Christian Unity Statement

(Chicago) - A statement on Christian unity will be drafted by the Eastern Orthodox Churches at the Pan-Orthodox meeting on the Island of Rhodes, it has been announced in Chicago by Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. (See EPS No. 38)

The Archbishop said the statement will be sent to the World Council of Churches with which many Orthodox bodies are affiliated, before it holds its Third Assembly in 1961 at New Delhi, India. It will also be forwarded to the Vatican before the Ecumenical Council called by Pope John XXIII is convened.

The Orthodox meeting, which is scheduled to last about ten days, will be the first of its kind since 1921. Representatives of the Armenian, Jacobite, Coptic, Ethiopian and Old Catholic Churches are expected to attend. The Orthodox Churches in Russia and Yugoslavia have already accepted the invitation to take part. In Geneva it has been learned that the meeting is scheduled for some time "soon after Easter". It had earlier been announced for July.

EPS, Geneva

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Anglicans Demand Repeal of Area Segregation Act

(Capetown, S. Africa) - Repeal of an act which provides for the segregation of South Africa's various racial groups into separate zones has been urged by a large majority vote of the Capetown Anglican Synod.

The synod denounced the measure, known as the Group Areas Act, as "un- Christian", "cruel", "unjust" and "tyrannical". The Rev. F.J. Rumsay, in moving the resolution, said that the church "should say to the government: 'We hold you responsible for the cruelty of this act and the suffering and suicides resulting from it.' It is no use timidly to ask the government to carry out this inhuman measure in a humane way", he declared. "You cannot say, 'I am going to cut your throat in a humane manner'".

In another session Dr. Joost de Blank, Diocesan Archbishop, told the synod that the Group Areas Act makes it "categorically" impossible to carry out plans to establish a multi-racial school or to admit non-white children to an existing Anglican school. He said that as an alternative, while the church continues to fight against the Act, it will make every effort to establish at least one non-white school in which the facilities are as good as the church's schools for whites. EPS, Geneva

Ancient Lexicon Discovered

(Athens) - What ranks as a major discovery in theological literature has been found in Greece. It is the famous Lexicon of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Photius, the Greek Orthodox scholar and theologian who was primate of the Church during the 9th century at the time of the schism which led to the separation of the Churches of the East and West.

The ancient document was discovered in a Greek Orthodox monastery in Macedonia by Bishop Philipos of Grevena on a recent trip. Plans to publish it in the original have been made by the Theological Faculty of the University of Thessalonika. Certain parts of the Lexicon have been known to a few scholars, but this is believed to be the only complete copy in existence. EPS, Geneva

Ethiopia Authorizes LWF Radio Station

(Geneva) - Authorization to set up a radio station in Ethiopia has been granted to the Lutheran World Federation.

Government approval of a franchise application submitted by the LWF a little over a year ago means it can now go ahead with plans to establish a powerful broadcasting unit capable of reaching all parts of Africa, western and southern Asia. This is the first time Ethiopian authorities have given a private agency permission to establish a radio station in the country.

The LWF installation will have a 50,000-watt short wave transmitter for long-range broadcasting and a powerful medium wave transmitter for local broadcasting. Programme production studios will also be set up in South Africa and Tanganyika. No date has been set for beginning the operation, pending a study of possible sites, the type of equipment needed and the recruitment of personnel. EPS, Geneva

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WCC Leader Addresses Russian Baptists

(Moscow) - Despite the severest frost of the last ten years, an overflow congregation of more than 2,000 worshippers filled Moscow's only Baptist church to hear a plea for Christian unity from Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches.

The WCC leader's 20-minute message in which he appealed for prayers for "such unity as will serve peace and better mutual understanding" brought tears to the eyes of many of the worshippers, reports said.

Later Dr. Visser 't Hooft and others of the five-member WCC delegation in Russia for a two-weeks' visit had a one-hour interview with Russian Baptist leaders. The WCC delegation, in the USSR as guests of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, is expected to return to Geneva on December 18. (See EPS No. 46) EPS, Geneva

Birth Control Issue Called "Football"

(Newark, N.J.) - Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, said last week that the controversy in the United States over birth control is being "handled like a football, even by churchmen." (See EPS No. 48)

The Orthodox leader told a meeting in Newark, N.J., that the issue is "not a topic for discussion" and should never have been brought before the public. He said the question of childbirth should be understood as "a moral responsibility".

Not to avoid childbirth, the prelate declared, "is a duty binding on all" as well as the care of children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord". The Orthodox Church is strongly opposed to any form of artificial birth control.

Arbishop Iakovos said the argument in favour of birth control is based on "the premise that society must forever banish from the face of the earth hunger, misfortune, juvenile crime, social revolution and wars, since all these are (seen as) a consequence of over-population". While this argument "may be correct," he said, it is "entirely negative". He said mankind should follow the Biblical injunction to "be fruitful and multiply", and added, "we have not yet replenished the earth to such an extent that over-population has resulted in degrading the dignity of man." EPS, Geneva

Asian Colleges Offer Free Student Places

(Rangoon) - Five theological colleges in Asia have offered a free place to a student from another Asian country and others are reported considering doing so.

The plan has been arranged following a recommendation of the constituting Assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference. EACC member churches have been asked to have interested students submit applications before March 1 to the EACC Secretary for Inter-Church Aid, the Rev. Alan A. Brash, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Colleges offering the free places are: United Theological College, Bangalore, India; Hong Kong Union Theological College; New Zealand Baptist College; Taiwan Theological College, Taipei; and the Tainan Theological College. EPS, Geneva

Greek Church Dedicates Deaconess School

(Athens) - Archbishop Theoklitos of Athens and All Greece has opened and blessed a new school and hostel for deaconesses, the first to be run by the Greek Orthodox Church in modern times.

Saint Barbara's has been under construction since 1950 and in partial operation since 1957. Training courses in social work are given to twelve deaconesses every year. The hostel accommodates 90 students, many of them taking other courses at the University of Athens.

Gifts to help with the project have come through the WCC from churches abroad, including the Disciples of Christ and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA.

Also taking part in the dedication were Professor Andreas Phytrakis, the general director of the Home Mission of the Church of Greece; the school's supervisor, Professor Hamilcar Alivisatos; and Miss Sophia Mourouka, the director of St. Barbara's, who studied in the United Kingdom on a scholarship from the World Council of Churches in preparation for her work. EPS, Geneva

Three Australian Churches Unite Missionary Training

(Sydney) - Mission boards serving three major Australian churches will open a united missionary college next January as "a witness to the ecumenical nature of the Church's task today".

The institution, to be known as "All Saints' College - Australian School for Ecumenical Mission", will train ministers, teachers, nurses, agriculturalists, builders, social workers, secretaries and technicians in communicating the Christian message and understanding the people they will serve.

Cooperating in support of the institution are the mission boards of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches and the London Missionary Society, which serves the Congregational Churches. Plans provide for use and possible enlargement of existing facilities at the Methodist Church's Sydney college.

The first principal of the new college is the Rev. Francis Whyte of the London Missionary Society, an Australian who has served for twenty years with the United Church of Northern India in Bengal.

An announcement of the foundation of the united college says "it is envisaged as a first step in the development of a centre of study and training for Australia, the Pacific area and the Asian churches". The constitution provides for admission of missionary students from boards belonging to the National Missionary Council of Australia. EPS, Geneva

Churchmen Offer to Act as Strike Mediators

(Detroit) - The National Council of Churches (US) has offered its services as a mediator in the prolonged US steel strike.

In a unanimously adopted resolution its General Board said that it made the offer because continuation of the strike now in its fourth month, "can lead to consequences with regard to freedom in collective bargaining which neither the steel companies nor the union want, and which can also impair other freedoms in our national life." It added that "a major industry immobilized... is a serious reflection upon democratic institutions".

In another resolution the policy-making board defended the right of the government to intervene in strikes when it can aid free bargaining through mediation or when it is necessary to protect the public welfare. In a statement on "Ethical Issues in Industrial Relations of Concern to Christians", it also said that union membership as a condition of continuing employment should be neither required nor forbidden by law. The 2,500 word pronouncement was approved by 73 delegates and opposed by 16, with 12 abstaining. EPS, Geneva

Revised Greek New Testament in Preparation

(Athens) - A committee of scholars and theologians has begun work on a new revised critical text of the New Testament in Greek.

The work has been undertaken by the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens which has access to several documents and manuscripts not available to editors of earlier editions. As a result, a spokesman said, it is believed that the new text will be the most accurate edition ever published.

When completed the new text is expected to replace the edition currently in use by Greek Orthodox churches. Publication is expected some time in 1960

The new text will be the first prepared by Greek Orthodox scholars. Previous ones have been prepared by non-Greek New Testament experts. The text currently in use was prepared in 1898 by a German scholar, the Rev. Eberhard Nestle, DD, for the Bible Society of Württemburg, Germany. This edition has been revised several times since, the last time in 1958 when it was published in England with a detailed listing of alternative readings. EPS, Geneva

In Brief

The government of Ghana has restored to church missions the control of schools established by missions in the Volta region, formerly British Togoland. The government took over the schools last year charging that they were being used for political activity against the territory's integration with Ghana.

* *

A delegation representing 50,000 natives of Papua, the Australian territory in the Island of New Guinea, has asked the Australian Minister for Territories to curb the flow of missionaries into Papua. The delegation expressed gratitude for the work of various mission schools and hospitals, but said there were already so many different missions from different denominations working there that the situation had become confusing to the Papuans. A report said the delegation was advised to direct their request to the next UN mission that will come to Papua on behalf of the UN Trusteeship Committee.

* *

An international study centre will be opened in January at Piriapolis, Uruguay, under auspices of the YMCA. Lecturers from Uruguay and abroad will conduct courses in philosophy, the arts and other subjects.

* *

The largest Lutheran body in South Africa, the 120-member Batswana Church, has been formally established on an autonomous basis at a constituent assembly held in Rustenberg. The church is the outgrowth of 102 years' work in the country by German Lutherans of the Hermannsburg Mission. EPS, Geneva

The next issue of EPS will be published on January 8, 1960.

I N D E X

OF NEWS ITEMS ISSUED IN ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE DURING THE SECOND SEMESTER 1959

GENERAL:

Russian Church Visitors Conclude Geneva Visit 27
Rapid Social Change Conference, July 25 - August 2 28
ECLOF Reports Loans to 78 Churches 29
YMCA Challenged to Work on Frontiers 29
Presbyterian World Alliance Will Meet in Brazil July 27-August 6. .29
First Ecumenical Youth Assembly in Europe is Planned 29
WCC Lists Summer Meeting Schedule 30
World Conference Maps Action in Areas of Change (Dutch Reformed Churchman Speaks on Race - American Missionary Calls for New Methods - Niles Urges "Solidarity" with Non-Christians - Churches Urged to Aid in Underdeveloped Areas - Economist Rebukes "Academics" - Kenya Political Leader Wants "Militant" Church). 31
YMCA Roman Catholic Leaders Meet 31
World Presbyterian Alliance Opens Council Sessions 31
The Student World 31
World Presbyterian Alliance Closes Sessions in Brazil 32
LWF Commission on World Mission in Denmark 32
First Reports from WCC's Central Committee in Rhodes (Orthodox Role in Ecumenical Movement Praised - Roman Catholic Ecumenical Council Issue Raised - State, Church Greet Delegates - Proselytism Criticized - Mutual Study Advised for Eastern and Western Churches - Closer WCC Ties with East Europe Churches Forecast - Careful Planning Urged for WCC Third Assembly - WCC-IMC Integration Stirs Debate - Orthodox Churches Object - Suspension of Nuclear Weapons Tests Urged - Moscow's Metropolitan Nikolai Greets WCC Central Committee - Study of "Faith and Order" Planned - Evangelism Study Report to be Published - CCIA Asks for Negotiation or Mediation in Algeria - Talks with Roman Catholics "Absolutely Informal" Say Orthodox) 34
Full Church Fellowship Among LWF Members Urged 34
Message from World Alliance of Reformed Churches to Member Churches 34
New WCC President is Elected - Third Assembly - Nuclear Weapons Testing - Algeria - IMC-WCC Integration - World Refugee Year - Budget - Faith and Order Future - Headquarters Property 35
Metropolitan Nikolai's Message of Greeting to the Participants in the Meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC 35
International Missionary Council Plans for Future 36
Roman Catholic Journalists Describe Rhodes Meeting with Orthodox. .37
Orthodox Spokesman Says "No Formal Talks" with Rome 37
Meeting of Roman Catholics and Orthodox at Rhodes, August 21,1959 .37
Family Planning Held as Christian Responsibility 38
Orthodox Leader Cites Success of WCC Rhodes Meeting 38
Dutch Resettled with WCC Aid 38
CCIA Issues UN Memo 39
Churches Aid Typhoon Victims 39
World YWCA Council Meets in Mexico 40
South African Appointed Secretary of All-Africa Conference 40
YMCA Aids Japanese Typhoon Victims 40
WCC Issues Second Appeal for Japan Typhoon Victims 41
WCC Asks Milk Supplies as US Cuts Programme 41
YWCAs Ask Nuclear Tests Ban 41
Orthodox Leader Reaffirms Unity Views 42
EACC Plans Ecumenical Course 43
Aid Asked in US Milk Emergency 43
Asian Churches Aid Typhoon Victims 43
WSCF Urges Christian Contacts with Moslem Students 44
WCC Support Pledged to "Freedom from Hunger" Campaign 44

Week of Prayer for Unity Will Stress Local Congregation 46
WCC Group to Visit Russia 46
John Edwards Dies in Strasbourg 46
Aid Asked for Moslem Refugee Schools 46
Africa Rapid Social Change Consultation 46
Roman Catholic Council Asked to Speak on Religious Liberty 47
Father Timiadis Named to WCC Post 47
Asian Colleges Offer Free Student Places 49
WCC Leader Addresses Russian Baptists 49
Ethiopia Authorizes LWF Radio Station 49

AFRICA: Africa Sunday School Curriculum Progresses 31
African Churches Seen Losing Ground 41
Orthodox Cause Expands in East Africa 46

ARGENTINA: Jehovah's Witnesses Demand Legal Recognition 30

AUSTRALIA: Australia Suggests Probe of Church Situation Under Communism . . . 34
Australian Churches to Study Common Bases 39
Roman Catholic Attitude Seen Impeding Unity 43
Australian Council Asks Nuclear Test Ban 43
Closer Russia-West Ties Hailed 46
Australian Churches Aid "Soldiers' Children" in Japan 47
Three Australian Churches Unite Missionary Training 49
New Guinea Asks for Less Australian Missionaries 49

AUSTRIA: "Psychological Difficulties" of Union Cited 43

BELGIUM: Additional Gift for Protestant Pavilion Centre 30
Ecumenical Courses at Louvain University 31
Belgium to Increase Support for Congo Mission Schools 32

BRAZIL: Merger Possibilities Cited for Brazilian Presbyterians 27

CAMEROONS: Cameroon Churches Move Towards Unity 38

CANADA: Canadian Baptists Reject WCC Membership Move 27
Archbishop Clark Installed as Canada's Ninth Primate 37

COLOMBIA: Colombian Lay Teacher Slain 27
Colombian Presbyterian Church Becomes Independent 36
Colombian Bishops Authorize Compensation for Damaged Church 40
Evangelical Communications Advance in Latin America 40
Colombia Asks Report on Protestant Charges 47

CUBA: Cuban Youth Defend Castro 35
Cuban Church Council Supports Castro 36

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Czech Methodists Ordain Women 40

DENMARK: Merger Plan Put to Danish Free Churches 45

ETHIOPIA: Ethiopian Patriarch Elevated in Coptic Church 26
Ethiopia-Soviet Pact Stirs Concern 32
Ethiopia Authorizes LWF Radio Station 49

FINLAND: Orthodox Institute at Helsinki University 41

FRANCE: Pilgrims Pray for Unity 41
Roman Catholics Asked to Pray with Protestants in Lyon 45
France's Taizé Community Starts New Ventures 45
French Churches Launch Food Appeal for Algeria 46
Late Abbé Couturier's Prayer Week Spreads 47

GERMANY: Bishop Dibelius Scores "Era of Barbarity" 26
Roman Catholic Church Elevates Monk 28
German Kirchentag, August 12-16, in Munich 29
German Youth Will Attend Vienna Youth Festival 29
Strong Atheist Note in "Youth Dedication" Instruction 29
East German Churches Told No New Literature Restrictions Planned. . 29
East German Newspaper Attacks Kirchentag 30
East German Christian Youth Denied Right to Attend School 30
German Youth Will Not Attend Vienna Festival 30
Bishop Dibelius Criticizes Pamphlet Attacking Niemöller 30
370,000 at Final German Evangelical Kirchentag Service 33
Bishop Stresses Partnership in Missions 34
New Report Cites German Clergy Shortage 38
More Visits Between Russian, German Churches 40
State Authority Issue Stirs German Controversy 41
German Church Approves WCC-IMC Merger 42
East Germans Reject Pastor's Release Petition 42
Church Rejects Dibelius' Views 42
Walter Freytag Dies at 60; Was WCC Leader 42
German Czech Exchange Visits Planned 42
Bishop Dibelius Conducts East Berlin Service 43
Hromadka Sees Atheism as World Phenomenon 45
East German Crowds Flock to Evangelism Campaigns 45
Dibelius Essay Banned in East Berlin 45
East German Church Conference Takes Stand on Socialist Rites . . . 45
German Socialists Adopt New Statement on Church 46

GHANA: Ghana Restores Control of Schools to Church 49

GREECE: University of Thessaloniki Names Kotsonis 27
Greece-Vatican Relations Denied 27
Greek Hierarchy Rejects Some State Demands 42
Salonica Celebrates 600th Anniversary of Saint's Death 45
Orthodox Cause Expands in East Africa 46
Greek Church Dedicates Deaconess School 49
Ancient Lexicon Discovered 49
Revised Greek New Testament Being Prepared 49
Orthodox to Prepare Christian Unity Statement 49

HUNGARY: New Moves Against Church Confirmation in Rumania and Hungary . . . 26
Hungarian Reformed Pastors Addressed by Karoly Olt 39
New Constitution for Hungarian Reformed Church 41

ICELAND: Icelandic Clergy Ask End to Force in Fishing Dispute 34
Ecumenical Institute in Iceland 41

INDIA: Statement of "Christian Concern" for Kerala 26
Cardinal Cautions Roman Catholics in Kerala 28
Bishop Stresses Partnership in Missions 34
Indian Parliament Rejects Political Gag of Religion 35
Indian Lutherans Train Laity 46

ISRAEL: Moscow Church Official Heads Israel Mission 44

ITALY: Papal Encyclical Speaks on Church Unity 28
Vatican Radio Announces RC-Orthodox Venice Conference 36
Revised Italian Penal Code Asked 39
Vatican Defers Meetings with Orthodox 41
RC Ecumenical Council in Three Years 43
Cardinal Tisserant Explains Resignation 46
Italian Protestants Seek Equality Under Penal Code 47
Italian Protestants Dislike Eisenhower's Vatican Visit 47
Pope Sets up Protestant Study Institute 47

JAPAN: Japanese Lutheran Merger Forecast 30
AVACO Will Mark 10th Anniversary 39
"Demonstrated" Christian Unity Urged 43

KOREA: Division Mars Korean Presbyterian Assembly 40
Korean Government Officials Praise Missions 41
Korean Church Split Widens 48

MEXICO: Caribbean Writers' Fellowship Organized 43

NETHERLANDS: Dutch Roman Catholics and Protestants Sponsor Meetings 44
Netherlands 'Gereformeerde' Churches Seen Nearer to WCC 45
Dutch Archbishop Advocates Ecumenism 48
Dutch Churches Will Discuss Reunion 48
10,000 Pentecostals in the Netherlands 48

NEW ZEALAND: New Zealand Churches Protest Against Race Discrimination 32
NCC News from New Zealand 32
New Zealand Storm Brews over Maori Footballers 41

NICARAGUA: Prayers Asked for Nicaragua Evangelism Crusade 30

NORWAY: Ecumenical Institute in Norway 47

PAKISTAN: Aid Asked for Flood Victims in West Pakistan 31

PHILIPPINES: Philippine Church Leader Denounces Former US Policy 28
Philippine Churchmen Consider Rapid Social Change 32

POLAND: Polish Leader Asks for Good Church-State Relations 28
Protestantism in Poland Undergoes Crisis 32
Cardinal Underscores Faith of Poles 36

RUMANIA: New Moves Against Church Confirmation in Rumania and Hungary . . . 26

SOUTH AFRICA: Dr. de Blank Challenges South African Premier 30
South African Reform Urged 32
Father Rakale Denied Passport 37
South Africa Marriage Laws Repeal Asked 41
Christians Urged to Build Bridges Between Races 41
Church Defends Multi-Racial Membership 43
Churches Study Afrikaner Family Life 43
De Blank Hits Marriage Ban 48
Anglicans Demand Repeal of Area Segregation Act 49

SPAIN: Prison Demanded for Spanish Pastor 40
Amnesty Granted Spanish Pastor 41

SWEDEN: Two Women Can Preach in Sweden 45

SWITZERLAND: "Real Identification" Asked in Refugee Aid 26
New Missionary Relationship Asked 32
New Era in Ecumenical Movement Seen 39

TURKEY: Ecumenical Patriarch Plans Visits 42
New "Old Believers" Community Discovered in Turkey 43

UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC: LWF Ends Arab Clothing Distribution 43

UNITED KINGDOM: Industrial Mission Plan Proposed by Church of England 26
BBC Birth Control Broadcast Scheduled Despite Opposition 27
Agreement on Church Government Held Necessary for Mergers 27
Scotland Holds Second Kirk Week 28
Methodists and Anglicans Will Share Church 28
UK Methodists Welcome Unity Discussions 28
Church of England Proposes Joint Baptism, Confirmation Rites . . . 29
Anglican Bishop Sees No Need for Women Priests 35

Christian Unity Advance Seen by British Leaders 37
Archbishop of Canterbury Commends Khrushchev Proposal 42
Anglican Study Group Recommends Change in Suicide Law 43
Irish Anglicans Give Church to Roman Catholics 46
Scottish Anglicans Reject Anglicans' Invitation 47

URUGUAY: Uruguay Ecumenical Centre Opened 44

U.S.A.: New Era Seen Dawning in Asian Missions 26
Brethren Ask Reconsideration of Post-World War II Agreements . . . 26
Parochial High Schools Not Required, Augustana Lutherans Say . . . 26
Missouri Synod Approves Unity Talks with New Church 27
Lutherans Move Towards Unity 28
Roman Catholic Bishop Cites Desire for Unity 28
Death of Roland Elliott, CWS Leader 28
First TV Bible Class in US 28
Rumanian Orthodox Cite Obstacles to Cooperation with Roman Catholics 29
Little Rock Church High Schools Close as Integration Proceeds . . . 30
Additional Gift for Protestant Pavilion Centre 30
Dr. Charles T. Leber Dies in Brazil 31
Roman Catholic Theologian Hails Ecumenical Movement 32
US Church Youth Groups Meet 35
Methodist Faculty Will Publish Social Action Study 35
Baptists Name Peace Commission Members 35
Merger Obstacles Raised for Moravians 35
Church Unity Would Give Hope, Syrian Orthodox Prelate Says 35
US Mennonites Urge End of Prejudice 35
US Church Membership Highest in History 36
Three US Student Groups Merge 36
Khrushchev Visit to US Churches Urged 36
US Churches Support Khrushchev Visit 37
"Year Abroad" Plan for Seminarians Announced 38
End of "Cold War" Between Christians Asked 38
Churches Urged to Aid in African Evangelism Efforts 38
US Churches Plan World Order Sunday 39
Roman Catholic Theologian Attacks Family Planning Methods 40
Methodists' "Mission to America" 40
New Lutheran Church Plans Ecumenical Action 41
African Churches Seen Losing Ground 41
Orthodox Leader Reaffirms Unity Views 42
New Church Establishes Missions-Relief Agency 42
Catholic Weekly Urges Common Bible 42
New York Airport Chapel Site Dedicated 42
Church TV Censured 43
Anglican Prelate Would Accept Pope as Leader 43
Aid Asked in US Milk Emergency 43
Church Contributions Up in US 43
Orthodox Headquarters Dedicated in New York City 43
US Unitarians, Universalists to Merge 44
Roman Catholics Report Total 18.3% of World Population 44
Presbyterians to Study Overseas Missions 44
Missouri Synod and NLC Plan Talks 44
Lutheran Urges Protestants, Catholics, Jews to Meet 45
American Leaders Survey Christian World Mission 45
Catholic-Orthodox Reunion Evaluated by US Bishops 45
Sharing of Birth Control Data Urged 46
Assembly Preview Meeting Held 46
US Student Conference Scheduled 46
US Christians "Spiritually Illiterate", Conference Told 46

US Church Offers Aid in Steel Strike Settlement 46
Signs of European Church Unity Cited 46
Youth Work Funds Sought in New York City 46
US Catholic Bishops Attack "Family Planning" Advocates 47
Presbyterians in US Seek Korean Reconciliation 47
Protestants Develop Mass Media in Latin America 47
Progress Reported on US Faith and Order Commission 47
Orthodox Leader Urges Bi-Lateral Unity Talks 47
Birth Control Issue in US News Spotlight 48
Methodists Ask US-China Trade Study 48
Huxley's Views Debated 48
US Churches Send Livestock to Teheran 48
Churchmen Offer to Act as Strike Mediators 49
Orthodox to Prepare Christian Unity Statement 49
Birth Control Issue Called "Football" 49

U.S.S.R.: Moscow Patriarchate Will Decline Possible Rome Invitation, Tass Says 26
Jehovah Witnesses Arrested in Soviet Union 29
WCC Leader Addresses Russian Baptists 49

YUGOSLAVIA: Yugoslav Communist Sets Limits for Church 27
Macedonian Church Recognized 30
Bible Shortage Reported in Yugoslavia 44
New Roman Catholic Bible in Yugoslavia 47

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